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cidedly lower plane than their canonical fellows, viewed from either the religious or the literary standpoint. It was because of their own character, and not through any accident, that they were left at one side. But on the other hand, it is important to bear in mind that it was not the result of mere chance that these particular books were preserved. It was the popular demand, first in the Jewish community and then in the Christian church, that selected them and kept them from perishing. They were not only characteristic products of their own time, but those writings—out of a vast number—which had proved themselves capable of wielding influence far beyond that time. We have, then, good ground for feeling that in studying these books which occupy the lower shelf of sacred scripture we are getting in touch with the common people, the humbler laymen of the two ancient religious communities in which they circulated; since it is to such an extent true that they represent the popular stratum of the religious literature to which they belong, containing not the more abstruse thought, and the outbursts of unusual emotion, produced by men who were unlike their fellows, but rather the feelings and beliefs which were cherished by the multitude. For this reason also, then, seeing that modern historical science tends more and more to find its center of gravity in the life of the common people, it seems certain that these half-forgotten records are destined now to be studied with new interest, not merely by experts in Biblical science and the history of religions, but by all those who have found their way to a truly wide study of literature and life.

CHARLES C. TORREY.

YALE UNIVERSITY.

### THE SABIANS.

One of the most important forerunners of Christianity is a sect whose adherents are called in the New Testament the disciples of John, or simply Disciples. They are Jewish separatists closely connected with the Sabians, and according to Neander positively identical with them. They kept the Mosaic law, but had adopted Babylonian and Persian beliefs. In fact we may regard them as a Judaized branch of the Mandæans.

The Mandæans are still found in scanty numbers in the Orient, mainly in Persia and southern Babylonia, but they are gradually disappearing. They are pre-Christian, however, in their origin and

have incorporated thoughts from all parts of the world in olden times that were accessible to Babylonia. The term *madda* (=knowledge) appears to be translated into Greek as *gnosis* which gave the name to the sects of the "Gnostics" and has its equivalent in the Buddhist *bodhi* (=enlightenment). It is interesting that at present the Mandæans call themselves *Nasorayya*, i. e., Nazarenes.

The main doctrines of the Mandæans are apparently Babylonian strongly modified by Persian dualism. Their light-god, Mana Rabba, has been identified with his prototype the Babylonian Ea, and his emanation, *Manda de hayye*, with Ea's son Marduk. This *Manda de hayye*, personified as Hibil Ziwa, is the mediator between the light-god and mankind, and his descent to hell has its prototype in Istar's descent to hell, and the same event is attributed to Christ in Christianity.

Other Babylonian ideas, such as the significance of seven and twelve as the numbers of the planets in the seven heavens and the mansions in the zodiac, are traced in Mandæism.

Manicheism, which originated in the latter part of the third century of the Christian era, can be traced to Mandæan sources and emphasizes mainly the Persian dualism.

The word Sabian means "baptizer." It is derived from the Hebrew *tsaba*<sup>1</sup> and ought to be pronounced *Tsabian*, with a sharp German *z* as initial. Baptism was a prominent rite among the Sabians, and we have good reason to assume that the Christians adopted baptism from them. We read in the Gospels that Jesus himself was baptized by their head, John, who lived as a hermit in the wilderness on the Jordan. Judging from their frequent mention in the New Testament, they must have been very numerous in the dispersion and were mainly distributed all over Asia Minor, having a great congregation at Ephesus.

The mass of the Sabians seem to have turned Christians, but some congregations remained an independent heretical sect which rejected Jesus as "the psychical Christ" while they worshiped a spiritual Christ, supposed to have been higher and nobler than the Christ worshiped by the Christians. In fact the Jesus of the church was sometimes considered as the anti-Christ who was said by these heretics to have falsified the baptism of John. Similar ideas are also found among other heretics, as for instance in the Basilidian sect.

One thing is sure, the Disciples were a sect which preceded

Christianity. Their religion like the faith of Apollos was very similar to Christianity, but they knew not the historical Jesus, the crucified one, and it is not impossible that they were mentioned in the Gospels solely for the purpose of converting their adherents to Christianity. This assumption renders the statements about St. John the Baptist and his disciples rather dubious, for we may assume that they were purposely made to indicate that St. John was a predecessor of Jesus and not an independent founder of a perfected religion.

Some time ago an interesting book was discovered which bears the title *The Odes of Solomon*. It has been edited and translated by J. Rendel Harris and the problem of its authorship has been much discussed. These odes appear to be pre-Christian, and yet the word "Christ" occurs in them frequently as a translation of "Messiah." They have been written under the inspiration of the Old Testament psalms and show much devotion and religious fervor; nevertheless the life of Jesus is unknown to their author, and they appear to have been written among Jews imbued with a spirit closely allied to Christianity.

It is very interesting that Mr. Preserved Smith points out in his article, "The Disciples of John and the Odes of Solomon," that the origin of these psalms must come from the circle of this remarkable sect, and he believes that their author must have lived and promulgated them in Ephesus, the central seat of the Disciples of John. If Mr. Preserved Smith's view can be maintained it will throw much light not only on the origin of Christianity but also on this its precursor, the sect of St. John.

Considering the undeniable fact that Christianity became the main rival of the Disciples and that large numbers went over from this religious movement into the Christian church, it is natural that those of them that remained became hostile to the new religion. They are the Gnostic sect of the Sabians, who we are told refused to recognize the Jesus as the Messiah. They naturally looked upon him as one who had preserved the true meaning of St. John's baptism.

The story of the Magi was invented to convert Zarathustrians or Mithraists, and we have otherwise no evidence that the Magi ever came to Bethlehem or Nazareth. We shall scarcely be mistaken if we treat the whole incident together with the highly improbable tale of the massacre of the innocents as a legend which found its way into the Gospels from non-Christian sources. We

need not add that the tale of the massacre of the innocents is also found in the Indian legends of Buddha and Krishna.

The story of St. John the Baptist seems to have been inserted into the Gospel for a similar reason. We may say, therefore, that we have no positive evidence that John the Baptist ever met Jesus. His existence as the founder or Jewish head of the sect of the Disciples, and the sect itself, must be granted to be historical. It was a powerful movement before Christ and at the time of St. Paul but lost its strength with the appearance of Christianity. It was so similar to Christianity that it was regarded as a heresy, and we can well understand that the last survivors who would not accept St. Paul's doctrine of the crucified Christ explained their own Christ to be spiritual (πνευματικός) and the Christ of the Christians as only psychical (ψυχικός).

We must remember that "spiritual" (πνευματικός) means a religious life on the highest plane, while the term psychical (ψυχικός) denotes the lower soul life. Where St. Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 44 speaks of the psychical and spiritual body our authorized translation renders the word psychical by "natural." Pneumatic or spiritual means calm and intellectual, while psychic or natural implies being passionate and sensuous or even sensual.

According to the same version Jesus was a psychic Christ, but when at the moment of baptism the Holy Ghost descended upon him the spiritual Christ was united with him and he became the true Christ; but this spiritual Christ departed again before the passion and, according to this interpretation, it was the psychic Christ who was crucified.

EDITOR.

### SIR JOHN HERSCHEL ON HINDU MATHEMATICS.<sup>1</sup>

[The following extract from Herschel's article "Mathematics" in David Brewster's *Edinburgh Encyclopædia* (Philadelphia, 1832) is reprinted because it contains facts little known and arguments too good to be ignored. At the time when the article appeared, Colebrooke's great translation of the standard Hindu works of Algebra was still fresh in the public mind. (London, 1817.)

ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.]

So early as the latter part of the tenth century (A. D. 980) Gerbert, having learned of the Moors in Spain their system of arithmetic, had imparted it to his countrymen the French, whence

<sup>1</sup> Substituting *Hindus* for "Indians," and using the modern spelling of Sanskrit words. I am indebted for a knowledge of this article to the venerable Mary Boole, through my sister, Mrs. F. Eagle.—A. J. E.